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Governor Signs Kuehl Bill Addressing Human Trafficking in California SB 180 creates California ACTS Task Force and law enforcement training

Senate Bill 180, authored by State Senator Sheila James Kuehl (D-Santa Monica) was signed into law by the Governor today. SB 180 creates the California Alliance to Combat Trafficking and Slavery (California ACTS) Task Force, which will raise public awareness of the issue and bring together relevant state agencies, law enforcement, and service providers to improve data collection, prosecution of traffickers, and victim protection and services. SB 180 also asks the Commission on Peace Officer Standards Training to implement training on human trafficking for peace officers in California. Such training is essential for successful detection, investigation, and prosecution of human trafficking cases.

“Every year, tens of thousands of men, women, and children are brought against their will to the U.S. to work in sweatshops, farms, personal residences, and the commercial sex trade. California, by virtue of its large manufacturing and service sector industries, global economic strength, and large immigrant population, is a major destination for human trafficking. Human trafficking is modern-day slavery and is becoming one of the most important human rights issues of the 21st century. It’s time for California to take serious action,” said Senator Sheila Kuehl.

The U.S. State Department’s Trafficking-in-Persons Report estimates that globally, approximately 600,000 to 800,000 people each year are traded against their will. The United States government estimates up to 18,000 women and children are trafficked each year into the United States, primarily from Latin America, countries of the former Soviet Union and Southeast Asia.

A recent UC Berkeley report entitled, *Freedom Denied: Forced Labor in California*, identified 57 forced labor operations in almost a dozen cities in California between 1998 and 2003, involving more than 500 individuals from 18 countries. Over eighty percent of the cases have been documented in Los Angeles, San Diego, San Francisco, and San Jose.

The Governor also signed AB 22 (Lieber), the California Trafficking Victims Protection Act. AB 22 establishes human trafficking as a crime in California and provides for the punishment of individuals that knowingly participate or benefit from this crime. It also creates a new civil cause of action for victims of human trafficking and requires local law enforcement to track incidents of trafficking.

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